

# THESIS STATEMENTS AND FOCUS

## Thesis Statement, Defined:

Your thesis statement is the central idea driving your paper. It declares what you want your readers to know, believe, or understand about your perspective. Typically, your thesis statement should contain three parts: a topic, a claim, and a purpose:

- The **topic** presents the subject of your paper.
- The **claim** offers your comment/opinion on that subject.
- The **purpose** should answer the question, “so what?” Why is your claim meaningful? What are you contributing to the discourse on your topic?

## Expectations of a Thesis Statement:

Your thesis statement should perform the following tasks:

- Include a topic that is open to investigation—thought-provoking and researchable;
- Propose a claim that is open to question—arguable and assertive;
- Submit a purpose that is open to interpretation—meaningful and relevant;
- Develop a scope proportionate to the length of the paper—narrow and specific enough to be thoroughly examined in the allotted pages and research available.

## Other Important Distinctions:

- Thesis “statement” may be misleading if you assume that “statement” limits the focus to one sentence. Your statement may include multiple sentences and is often in direct proportion to the length of your paper.
- A **direct thesis statement** traditionally occurs in the beginning of an academic paper to serve as a guide for your reader.
- An **indirect thesis statement** provides navigable points for your reader but is not explicitly stated.
- A **delayed thesis statement** is the culminating focus of a paper (this type of thesis can be effectively used in a nonfiction or personal inquiry paper).

## Checking for Focus in Drafts:

*Reverse Outline:* Outline your rough draft, stating the focus/theme of each paragraph and the function of the paragraph in the paper. Can you connect-the-dots to follow the logic from paragraph to paragraph? Does your thesis still hold? Did you discover something about your focus? How can you include that in the thesis?

*Share Aloud:* Read your draft to a friend. Can s/he follow and repeat back to you the main idea of the paper? If not, what new ideas arose when sharing the draft? Do you want to include these in an expanded thesis statement? Save them for a later piece?

*Cut-N-Paste:* Cut your draft into chunks that share similar ideas. Read each section on its own and ask yourself whether it speaks to the thesis statement. If it does not speak to the thesis, should these be cut? Reorder the chunks according to their relationship with your thesis. Write transition sentences between each new paste.